Fact Sheet for Parents/Guardians

Synchronous Learning

During full or partial school closures, or under any other periods of remote learning, students in Ontario's Provincial and Demonstration Schools are encouraged to be engaged in their learning and continue to have access to their school community, a support network.

1. Definitions

Remote learning: Learning that occurs when classes are taught at a distance and when students and educators are not in a conventional classroom setting. Remote learning takes place in times of extended interruption to in-person learning – for example, as a result of a pandemic or natural disaster. Classes can be synchronous or asynchronous and can be taught online through a Learning Management System (LMS) or by using videoconferencing tools. In some cases, they may be delivered through emails, print materials, broadcast media, or telephone calls.

Synchronous learning: Learning that happens in real time. Synchronous learning involves using text, video, or voice communication in a way that enables educators and other members of the school- or board-based team to instruct and connect with students in real time. Synchronous learning supports the well-being and academic achievement of all students, including students with special education needs, by providing educators and students with an interactive and engaging way to learn. It helps teachers provide immediate feedback to students and enables students to interact with one another.

Asynchronous learning: Learning that is not delivered in real time. Asynchronous learning may involve students watching pre-recorded video lessons, completing assigned tasks, or contributing to online discussion boards.

2. Minimum Requirement for Synchronous Learning

During periods of remote learning where students are at home for more than three days in a given week, students are to be provided with synchronous learning. The minimum requirements for synchronous learning help to ensure that students have access to both synchronous and asynchronous learning opportunities for 300 minutes each day in elementary and, in secondary, for students with a full timetable. The scheduled synchronous learning sessions must be communicated to parents and students. Educators should use their

professional judgement to provide some flexibility to students on an individual basis when students are unable to participate in synchronous learning. The table below outlines the minimum amount of time per day that students, depending on their grade level, must be provided with synchronous learning as part of their scheduled or timetabled learning.

Division	Grade Level of Students	Daily Minimum Synchronous Learning Time Requirement*
Elementary	Kindergarten	180 minutes
	Grades 1 to 3	225 minutes
	Grades 4 to 8	225 minutes
Secondary	Grades 9 to 12	The higher of 60 minutes for each 75-minute class period** or 225 minutes per day for a full course schedule

* This is in addition to asynchronous learning time.
** The synchronous learning time requirement for any period that is not 75 minutes should be adjusted to reflect this ratio.

Please see the PDSB Reopening Plan for more information about synchronous learning.

3. Exemption from Synchronous Learning

Students enrolled in an Ontario Provincial or Demonstration School are permitted to be exempted, on an individual basis, from the minimum requirements for synchronous learning that apply in times of extended interruption to conventional in-person learning, such as during ordered school closures.

Exemptions from synchronous learning may be requested by parents/guardians or by students who are 18 years of age or older, and students who are 16 or 17 years of age but have withdrawn from parental control.

Please contact your school's principal if you would like to request an exemption from synchronous learning.

4. Cyber Security, Privacy, and Online Safety

The protection of privacy and the cyber security of students, parents and educators is paramount to supporting a safe and inclusive environment for remote learning.

In order to foster a culture of privacy and security, students, parents and educators should have a common understanding of the information that needs to be kept confidential and should always follow best practices to ensure confidential information is kept secure.

Guidelines for All Users:

- Use only the passwords and accounts assigned to you.
- Do not share passwords.
- Use only student initials for account creation instead of full names.
- Students, school staff, residence staff and support staff should be aware of and follow PDSB policies regarding digital conduct and privacy.

Guidelines for Students:

As per the Acceptable and Responsible Use of Information and Communication Technologies policy, students are expected to:
- Use information and technology in a manner that is courteous, and that aligns with applicable PDSB codes of conduct.
- Use school equipment in a way that preserves lifespan of limited resources, protects the integrity of the network, and maintains a high standard of care and maintenance.
- Practice personal safety when initiating or responding to individuals via telecommunications.
- Alert a teacher, residence counsellor or school administrator immediately if inappropriate information was accessed by the student.

Using online platforms and tools is an excellent way to continue learning remotely and to interact and communicate with teachers and classmates. However, it is important to protect student personal safety when online by following the rules and guidelines outlined below:
- Students must never disclose information about their personal identity (such as name, address, phone number, age, physical description or school) while online. Likewise, students must not disclose such information in a public online forum.
- Students must never disclose personal information online about someone else without the other person's prior permission.
- Students must never disclose personal access passwords or those of other students.
- Students must never send pictures of themselves, another person or a group of people over an electronic network without prior informed permission of all the individuals pictured and, in the case of minors, their parents or guardians.
- Students must report immediately to a staff member any message or request that they receive that suggests contact in person.
- Students must never disclose the specific dates, times and locations of where they might be.
- Students must use PDSB-approved platforms for conducting schoolwork and to interact and communicate with staff

- Inappropriate use of technology by any student within PDSB (as the Acceptable and Responsible Use of Information and Communication Technologies policy states) will result in progressive disciplinary action.

Students and parents should review the list of Do's and Don'ts for Virtual Learning in Appendix A.

5. Technical Support

Virtual Learning Technical Support
If a student encounters an issue while learning at home, the steps set out below can be followed:

1. Send an email to pdsbsupport@pdsbnet.ca describing the technical issue for which the student is seeking support.
2. PDSB Staff will review the email and assign it to the correct group for action
   a. Technical issue – Staff will log a ticket with the appropriate IT Helpdesk
      i. If required, IT staff may reach out to the staff/student directly, or if feasible, filter questions through the staff member submitting the ticket
   b. School/non-technical issue – staff will direct email to appropriate school area
3. Once a resolution or response is provided, PDSB staff will share the resolution or response with the student/family.
4. Once resolved, PDSB Staff will move the email to the "Resolved" folder.

Appendix A: Do's & Don'ts for VIRTUAL LEARNING

DO:

- ✓ Consider that you or your child's computer and internet access is just as important as the physical settings in a typical classroom. Therefore, a few suggestions:
    - o Ethernet enabled device connections are preferred over Wi-Fi connections.
    - o Remove as many distractions from the learning environment as possible.
    - o Confidentiality of the learning space is important. The learning environment should be reserved for the student alone as much as possible.
- ✓ Review the Responsible Use policies.
- ✓ **Get Involved**
- ✓ Show your parent / ask your child to see their online coursework.
- ✓ Stay connected and reach out to the teacher regularly.
- ✓ Monitor and restrict late-night gaming behaviour on school days much like you would when attending school physically. Sleep is very important to the virtual learner!
- ✓ Create a schedule or routine as much as possible. When students are able to predict and prepare for upcoming learning opportunities, they are more likely to engage.
- ✓ Make sure you are scheduling brain breaks and movement breaks into your 'online' day. REACH OUT. It is important for both families and students to know that we are here and available to answer and address your learning needs. Although we may not have the answers immediately, we will work together to resolve the issues together.

DO NOT:

- ✗ Set up your child's learning environment in a busy part of the home, if possible.
- ✗ Record or take photos of online interactive sessions involving teachers, staff and/or other students. Ensuring Student Confidentiality including your own /your child's is a priority for the PDSB. Students who do not comply with our Responsible Use Policy during online learning are subject to the same disciplinary action as they would in the physical learning environment.
- ✗ Let feelings of isolation or confusion build. If you are unclear on an assignment or how to navigate the various platforms that are being shared with you, reach out / ask questions and let others know.